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DICTIONARY OF COMPUTER WORDS

An A to Z Guide
to Hardware,
Software, and
Cyberspace

EDITORS OF THE
Average[®] Dictionaries

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that uses magnetic tape to store data digitally. A DAT cartridge is smaller than a 3.5-inch floppy disk and can hold from 700MB (megabytes) to 2.3GB (gigabytes). Because DATs allow only sequential access, they are best used for backups. See table following access time.

data Facts, as in the form of figures, characters, or words, especially when given to the computer as *input* to be stored in *machine-readable* form. When you type words or numbers into a *database*, for example, the computer stores this as data in *binary* form. The word "data" is actually the plural form of "datum," which means "a single fact," but "data" has taken on a life of its own. This means that you can treat it as a plural out of respect to its origins or as a singular in deference to its independence. See also *information*.

database An organized collection of information that can be searched, retrieved, changed, and sorted using a collection of programs known as a *database management system*. Many databases are organized into *records* consisting of data that have been *input* into *fields*. For example, an address database may have one record for every person whose address is included. Each record might have one field for names, another field for street addresses, another for ZIP codes, and still another for phone numbers. See also *flat-file database*, *hypertext*, *relational database*.

database administrator Abbreviated **DBA** A person with a high degree of technical expertise who is responsible for the design and management of an organization's *database*. A database administrator is usually responsible for evaluating, selecting, implementing, and maintaining the *database management system*. These functions sometimes include designing and maintaining the structure and content of tables and the relationships between tables, reports, and *queries* within a database.

database management system Abbreviated **DBMS** The program or programs that control a *database* so that the information it contains can be stored, retrieved, updated, and sorted. The scale and capabilities of DBMSs vary widely. There are database